

# Boulmer Howick & Longhoughton



## LONGHOUGHTON BOULMER AND HOWICK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN TO 2036

### CONSULTATION JUNE 2021: RESULTS AND COMMENTS

Thank you to all the residents who completed the Consultation response form. Your views are very much appreciated and will guide the Parish Council on the next stage in putting together the draft Neighbourhood Plan. A summary of the responses received are set out below. The Parish Council's comments on the questions raised are also below. Some of the comments suggest there may be misunderstanding on the role of the Parish Council and what it is able to do, so we have included some comments where appropriate.

Overall we received 118 responses from residents and six responses from local and national organisations. The films that we produced as introductions to the topics (in view of the COVID regulations that did not allow for face to face meetings) were well used with a total 330 viewings and during the consultation period the website was viewed by 974 people.

A summary of the responses from residents is given below and more details are given on our website [www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk](http://www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk)

#### Sustainability of the Parish and Community

101 (85%) of the responses thought that the proposals have it right or generally right.

#### Protecting the natural environment

102 (86%) of the responses thought that the suggested approach was right or partly right.

#### Protecting and enhancing our heritage

96 (82%) of the responses thought that the suggested approach was right or partly right.

#### Good Design – Has the Design Guide and Code captured the key features of the Parish?

79 (67%) of the responses were in agreement or partly in agreement with this.

#### Green spaces that we wish to preserve and protect

69 (58%) of the responses thought that the proposals are right or generally right.

23 (19%) of the responses objected to losing green spaces for new housing.

#### Community Needs and Facilities

96 (82%) of the responses supported the proposals along with additional suggestions.

#### New Housing and Sites for Housing

93 (80%) of the responses supported or generally supported the proposals especially for affordable housing and small units but some had concern on the sites and other issues.

#### New housing at Boulmer – proposal for all new housing to be for permanent occupation

111 (94%) of the responses were in favour of the proposal with a small number suggesting a different approach.

## **Business, Tourism and Employment to support the Local Economy**

76 (65%) of the responses supported the proposals with some putting forward further suggestions.

## **The Plan to improve Transport and Access across the Parish**

79 (67%) of the responses require improved public transport, car parking and safer roads, and there is good support for Greenways and new footpaths along with support for renewable energy and electric vehicle charging points.

# **RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ISSUES RAISED BY RESIDENTS**

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Question - Why do we need a Neighbourhood plan?**

**Answer** - The facility for communities to have their own plan came in with legislation in 2011. The Neighbourhood plan captures the needs and issues that are local to the community reflecting its own unique circumstances. Without a neighbourhood plan, planning applications would be determined in accordance with the countywide local plan. A neighbourhood plan allows the local community to identify where development should and should not be located.

### **Question – Is the Neighbourhood plan sufficiently providing for the effects of climate change?**

**Answer** – We would like to assure residents that the plan does provide for the changes that are needed to deal with the impacts of climate change. The plan should not repeat national and county level policies and there is already a lot of guidance and requirements regarding climate change. The Design Guide includes requirements to re-use materials, conserve water and energy and support for the renewable generation of electricity so that the community contributes to the targets to reduce carbon to net zero. Equally the Plan supports protecting the environment, providing more green routes for sustainable transport and things like planting more trees. There are already projects taking place in the Parish aimed at renewable energy generation and the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

### **Question – How can the Parish be sustainable if people leave the Parish for work elsewhere?**

**Answer** – Without significantly increased employment the Parish could not be sustainable from this point of view. But this applies to just about all rural villages where some of its residents leave daily to undertake employment in other cities, towns and villages. This mobility is part of what has driven the British economy for many years and has contributed to the increase in our standards of living. People who travel elsewhere to employment still contribute to the sustainability of the community even though they may not work here. COVID has resulted in many people working from home and we expect this trend to continue even after COVID has declined.

## **PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **Question – What is the Parish doing to protect the environment?**

**Answer** – It is proposed that the neighbourhood plan will include a number of policies to protect and enhance our valued natural environment. All future planning applications will be assessed against these policies. In addition, the Parish Council is doing a whole range of things to protect the environment but most of them rely upon residents getting involved and taking on the responsibility themselves. For example there is the Climate Change Group; the People, Planting and Places Project run by residents; the initiative to create greenways; the volunteer projects to keep the beaches clean of litter and other rubbish and the Parish Council works closely with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We are indebted to the many residents who take part in these activities.

### **Question – Has the Parish Council considered introducing Conservation areas for the core of our three villages and can the heritage be promoted by a heritage trail?**

**Answer** – The possibility of designating the traditional core of our villages as Conservation areas is currently being considered by the officers of the County Council and the Area of Outstanding

Natural Beauty. Any proposals will be put to the communities involved. In terms of a heritage trail, a group of residents at Longhoughton have been doing work with a view to eventually introducing a heritage trail.

**Question – Surely there are more green spaces at Howick than the Evelyn Howick Memorial Nature Reserve?**

**Answer** – This is quite right, but the other green spaces, such as the Arboretum, are protected in other ways which is why it is not included.

## **GOOD DESIGN**

**Question – How will the Neighbourhood Plan bring about good design?**

**Answer** – It is proposed that the neighbourhood plan will include a policy on good design against which all new development proposals will be assessed. This policy will be informed by the design guide which will be an appendix to the plan.

## **GREEN SPACES**

**Question – Why cannot all the land around Longhoughton and Boulmer be protected by Local Green Space or Protected Open Space? What are the differences and where does 'Green Belt' fit in?**

**Answer** – First, there is no green belt in North Northumberland so there is no land in the Parish which is classified as green belt. Land outside the settlement boundary is defined as countryside, and both national and local planning policy places restrictions on development in the countryside.

The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- In reasonable close proximity to the community it serves;
- Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Protected Open Space can be those areas of open space which are valued for their local amenity and for formal or informal recreational purposes but which do not meet the full Local Green Space criteria. Furthermore, in general planning policies at national and county level, there are policies to protect agricultural land and to stop "ribbon development" in isolated locations.

## **HOUSING AND HOUSING SITES**

**Question - What evidence has the Parish Council to demonstrate that additional housing is needed in the Parish?**

**Answer** – Two independent surveys were carried out, one by Community Action Northumberland (CAN) and one by AECOM. CAN is legally constituted to carry out these surveys on behalf of the County Council and AECOM is an international company founded in the USA and nominated by the UK Government to undertake projects in relation to Neighbourhood Plans. Both reports are available on our website. Both demonstrate that there is a need within the Parish for more houses that are affordable by the local population and that there is a need for smaller houses of one, two and three bedrooms for existing families to upsize or downsize according to their needs and stage in life. The Parish Council's preference is that estates should be of restricted size and a mixture of affordable and market houses, to buy or rent, rather than being segregated.

**Question – The Consultation nominated six possible sites for new housing in Longhoughton and two each in Boulmer and Howick. How many sites are you expecting to be put forward in the final version of the Neighbourhood Plan?**

**Answer** – The Steering Group first considered twenty possible sites but these were reduced to ten by a logical process based on evidence. The site assessment background paper used for this purpose is available on our website. The consultation on the ten potential new housing sites was a genuine attempt to obtain the view of residents. There is no hidden agenda, nothing has been decided and where we suggested 'mixed' use this again was to obtain the views of residents. There is little space in the centre of Longhoughton to establish new housing, other than the Johnnie Johnston site, so any new building has to take place on the periphery of the village. We appreciate that many

people do not want new building close to where they live. In the case of any new housing sites the Parish Council wishes to see existing trees and natural features preserved along with footpaths and greenways and the sites designed with open spaces and wildlife corridors which are an integral part of the design. In Boulmer the proposal is hopefully to attract new younger residents to live permanently in the village. This will help re-balance the age profile and add vitality.

**Question – Many of the RAF Houses are empty, can these be used to solve the need for more houses?**

**Answer** - Discussions have taken place with the RAF in relation to the empty houses that are for service families. The RAF are expecting an increase in the number of service families coming to RAF Boulmer later in the year and early next year. The empty properties are being reserved for this purpose.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the RAF regularly review its service family accommodation nationwide against current and future needs of the MOD.

Within the Parish the houses occupied or reserved for service families is just under 150 which is 19% of the total houses in the Parish.

**Question – Why are you proposing the possibility of changing the use of the Old Recreation Ground?**

**Answer** – The Housing Site Assessment took into account that the site is listed on the Northumberland Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment as suitable, available and achievable for new housing. It was also considered that it is large enough to accommodate an area for recreation, car parking and a small number of new houses. It is also in a good position to have a greenway linking the housing estates on the east side of the B1339 including safe access to the primary school. Road access is available from East Moor. We recognise, therefore, that the land could provide a number of uses, including some continued access for dog walking and environmental protection. The Old Recreation Ground is owned by Northumberland Estates and rented by the Parish Council. The rental is on a year by year basis and could be terminated by the Estate, so the present use is not secure.

**Question – You have asked for support for new housing at Boulmer to be ‘permanent occupation’ only. How does this work?**

**Answer** – Provided the Neighbourhood Plan is approved, there will be a legal requirement for all new houses at Boulmer to be for permanent occupation only and this will last in perpetuity irrespective of the owners. This is the same that has been agreed by residents at Alnmouth, Craster and Beadnell. However, this requirement does not apply to the sale of existing houses by owner occupiers and by private landlords.

**Question – Does the Neighbourhood Plan propose that our three villages have settlement boundaries?**

**Answer** – Settlement boundaries designate the boundary of a settlement for development apart from some specialised circumstances. It has not yet been decided whether the Neighbourhood Plan should include a settlement boundary for each or all of our three villages, although it should be noted that the yet to be approved Northumberland Local Plan does include a settlement boundary for Longhoughton. This will be considered and we thank those residents who raised this issue.

## **BUSINESS AND TOURISM**

**Question – What is the Parish Council doing to enable more people to work from home and set up their own businesses?**

**Answer** – COVID has brought about a need for more people to work from home and this is almost certainly going to continue into the future. Setting up a new business and working from home requires excellent broadband speeds and mobile phone signals. The Parish Council is working with iNorthumberland to bring high speed broadband to those areas that do not currently have them which are the outlying parts of the Parish.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES TRANSPORT AND ACCESS**

### **Question – What is happening about the need for more off road car parking in Longhoughton and Boulmer?**

**Answers** – Longhoughton – The opening of the Running Fox will bring more vehicles into Longhoughton along with the Boulmer Road camping/caravan site. Also, Lacey Street is a traffic black spot during school term time and then there is the issue of vehicles going down Beach Road to Sugar Sands and Howdiemont sands. Longhoughton clearly needs a permanent off-road car park. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council is considering the possibility of a car park at the southern end of the Old Recreation field at the bottom of Crowlea Road. The proposals are at the early stages and at this point in time there is no formal agreement with the landowner or with an operator for the car park.

Boulmer – A consultation by the County Council with Boulmer residents on the need for off-street parking in Boulmer ended on 7th July 2021. We await the outcome of the consultation.

### **Question – What is happening to solve the problem of excessive use and the speed of vehicles on Beach Road and the parking issues at Sugar Sands and Howdiemont sands?**

**Answer** – There is NO truth in the rumour that the road is to be closed. It is a public road until the point it enters the dunes. The issue is that it is unsustainable for a large volume of vehicles to use the road and park on the dunes and headland. It is widely recognised by all the partners that this is a special place which is being damaged and something needs to be done to restrict the volume of vehicles using the road and parking there. A number of organisations, including the landowner and the Forsyth family who farm at Low Steads, have been working together to find a solution. The Parish Council is committed to finding a solution that is agreeable to all the parties that restricts the number of vehicles using Beach Road and to have a limit on parking on the dunes and to this end is writing a paper to put proposals to the partnership. The PC is aware of the requirements and wishes of the community and will include these in any ideas. The investigation into finding a solution to this issue is ongoing as this is a difficult, complex and multi-organisational issue, however, once the final proposals are put together they will be put to the community before implementation.

### **Question – Many people want to see a pub, post office and more shops in Longhoughton, why cannot these be provided?**

**Answer** – These type of enterprises are run by private businesses. They will not invest in buildings and staff unless they consider there is a reasonable possibility of their business being viable and making a profit. There is little that the Parish Council can do to encourage businesses to Longhoughton other than by promoting the prospects and the stated needs of residents. We believe that encouraging quality businesses is the right approach and we are aware that the planning policies support such an approach.

### **Question – Many people consider that the 20mph scheme through Longhoughton has been a failure. What is the Parish Council doing to change this?**

**Answer** – It is acknowledged that the average traffic speed is not within the 20mph limit although it has reduced from what it was before the limit was introduced. The Parish Council has been working with a group of knowledgeable experts from the County Council and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to come up with improvements to the 20mph scheme to reduce the speed of vehicles and to make the roads in Longhoughton safer for all users. It is hoped that details of the changes can be announced within the next few months.

### **Question – What Greenways is the Parish Council expecting to pursue?**

**Answer** – Over the next few years the Parish Council would like to see Greenways connecting the local village (and the railway station at Hipsburn) as safe and secure routes for walkers and cyclists. This will contribute to the objective of promoting sustainable transport rather than using motor vehicles and will assist in keeping people healthy. Within Longhoughton village a circular Greenway will be sought (the green necklace) which enables residents to travel around the village without having to go on the B1339.

### **Question – What is happening with the re-construction of Howick Burn Bridge?**

**Answer** – The Parish Council is committed to replacing the bridge, but this is a complex issue in terms of design, funding and permissions. We need a number of comparable quotations for the re-

building of the bridge and these are being sought, but due to its location and difficult access plus the need for public-liability insurance, this is proving to be difficult and we therefore now need to approach specialist contractors. Once acceptable quotations have been received there will be a need to raise further funding for the job which will also include applying for grants.

**Question – When will the medical centre in Longhoughton re-open?**

**Answer** – The Parish Council cannot answer this question. The medical centre in Longhoughton is run by the Alnwick Medical Group and it is their decision on when they re-open. The Parish Council has noted the wishes of many residents for the centre to re-open.

**Suggested Improvements to Public Facilities, Transport and Access**

The suggested improvements listed below were put forward by residents in response to the consultation.

Improvements Required	Number of residents nominating this improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements to the frequency of Public Transport/Bus services to Alnwick and Alnmouth Station &amp; Boulmer. Improved parking at Alnmouth Station. Also a Park and Ride service</li> </ul>	36
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for more Greenways around and connecting local villages, including more footpaths and circular routes.</li> </ul>	26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved and the re-opening of medical facilities in Longhoughton</li> </ul>	22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructure improvements – roads, road safety, speed, pavements, parking (both Longhoughton and Boulmer).</li> </ul>	18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for a Public House/Restaurant</li> </ul>	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Post Office and more shops</li> </ul>	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved internet speeds and mobile phone signal (includes Howick)</li> </ul>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Toilets in Longhoughton for visitors</li> </ul>	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More Allotments</li> </ul>	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electric charging points</li> </ul>	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage greater use of Westfield Park</li> </ul>	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Car sharing promoted by the Parish Council</li> </ul>	1

**GENERAL ISSUES**

**Question - How long do you expect all the proposed changes to take before they are implemented?**

**Answer** - We are hoping that the Neighbourhood Plan will be approved at a referendum sometime in 2022. Many of the changes that are included in these responses may take a number of years to implement. It is important that residents are fully consulted and are able to express their views before the final proposals are agreed and implemented.

**NEXT STEPS**

The Parish Council Steering Group will be taking the following steps after considering all the responses received from residents and other organisations:

- Which housing sites to take forward
- Any changes to Protected open space and Local Green Space
- Greenways and the routes that we wish to pursue
- Whether we need settlement boundaries
- Permissive footpaths and existing footpath maintenance
- Inclusion of support for Renewable Energy

These decisions will be included in the next draft of the Neighbourhood Plan which will be subject to a further consultation with residents and other organisations.